

Funeral Policy for First Congregational Church Gardner during COVID19:

For Christians, gathering to mourn the dead, celebrate their life and proclaim the hope of Resurrection are essential practices of our faith. During the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID19 outbreak, our usual mourning rituals have been interrupted. We think of those women on that first Easter, who went to follow their familiar mourning ritual to anoint Jesus's body, to find it disrupted. We remember their initial shock and confusion and feel it too. We're waiting to feel the hope of resurrection. In times of trial like the death of a loved one, we turn to the familiar practices and rituals of our faith and ancestors. And so we know that this disruption for a grieving community is doubly hard. We grieve this disruption with you.

During the COVID19 outbreak, on March 10, 2020 Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker declared a [State of Emergency](#) and then limited gatherings to no more than 10 people. The [Centers for Disease Control](#) has recommended no gatherings larger than 10 people.

Until the State of Emergency is lifted for Massachusetts, we will be limited in our funeral practices in the following ways:

Viewing/Wake:

a) We are not able to accommodate a wake at this time.

Funeral:

1. We are not able to host a funeral service at the church at this time.

Graveside:

1. a) We are able to host a graveside service outdoors and require that all people practice social distancing of 6 feet between one another. We are able to accommodate 10 people present.

Repast/Collation:

a) We are not able to host a meal following the funeral at this time.

While we are limited in what we are able to host at this time, we are able to plan for memorials after the pandemic has passed. We would welcome the opportunity to host a memorial service for your loved one at a later date when we can all safely gather and celebrate their life.